

## **R.I. Governor's Advisory Commission on Aging**

### **Minutes of the Monthly Meeting January 20, 2016**

### **Pasteur Building 57, Pastore Complex, Cranston RI**

Present were: Susan Adler, Sue Robbio, Jennifer Barros, Barry Zeltzer, Bill Flynn, Joan Crawley, Dr. Brian Ott, Esther Price, Carmen Roy, DEA Director Charles Fogarty, Meghan Connelly (DEA staff)

Susan Adler chaired the meeting in Karen Enright's absence. She thanked everyone for their expressions of concern during her recent illness.

Minutes of the December Meeting: On a motion by Crawley, seconded by Robbio, **the Minutes of the December 16, 2015 Meeting were APPROVED as presented.**

Report from Director Fogarty: DEA Director Fogarty reported on the following items:

- *Home & Community Care Regulations Hearing* was held January 5 to take effect in February as follows: a) Increasing co-pay program income eligibility from 200% to 250% of the FPL; b) Allowing program to serve persons age 59+ with mild dementia.
- *Transit:* The RIPTA Board of Directors agreed with the Governor's request to delay elimination of no-fare passes for low-income elderly and persons living with disabilities until July 1, 2016 and to substitute a per-trip fee of 50¢ for original proposal of \$1. Director Fogarty is part of an inter-agency working group that is working on possible alternatives to the no-fare passes.
- *Legislation:* Meghan Connelly will serve as DEA's legislative liaison in addition to her duties as Public Information Officer.
- *Training Academies:* will be resumed beginning on January 26 at the Johnston Senior Center. Their primary target audience includes senior center directors, resident services coordinators and other professionals serving the elderly. Copies of the agenda for the meeting were distributed.

Dr. Ott asked whether DEA offered programming to "check in" on isolated elders. Director Fogarty said it administered the Senior Companion Program that currently had about 75 volunteers doing home visits, with a waiting list of 15 more requests for the service. He noted that the Diocese of Providence also provides senior companions through funding for this program. Price noted that the application process could be somewhat burdensome.

- *Senior Emergency Preparedness:* DEA recently partnered with the RI Emergency Management Agency on emergency preparation training.

- *Lifespan Respite Grant:* A contract with the URI and RIC nursing programs has been completed. It will place nursing students with families who need persons with medical training to provide respite care for caregivers of persons with medical needs. The program also has the goal of introducing nursing students to the field of geriatrics.

Director Fogarty also noted that DEA had identified additional funding of \$50,000 for respite services during this fiscal year.

- *DEA Staffing:* An open position in the Community Care Unit will be filled in February. The Division's CFO has moved to DCYF, an interim person is staffing that function.

- *Communications:* A Medicare supplement guide has just been completed. It will be distributed to SHIP counselors, senior centers, etc. It also will be posted online. DEA is working with RI.Gov on its new Website. Home pages are set, working on "extra pages." Work on the pocket manual is moving along. A DEA Monthly Newsletter is being distributed electronically. Also have a twitter account and Facebook page.

Report of Subcommittee on Isolated Seniors: Barry Zeltzer reported on the January 19 meeting of the Subcommittee. It defined its mission as researching how to identify seniors in need who are living alone, and how, once identified, they can receive help. Possible topics for inquiry included a) effectiveness of the flow of communication among homecare agencies, hospitals, caregivers and DEA concerning ; b) adequacy of training in mental health and dementia for volunteers and staff in agencies such as Meals on Wheels; c) sufficiency of public awareness of these services; d) coordination of case management. Dr. Ott reported on results of a small informal survey he conducted about these issues among some Lifespan clinicians and a client. Zeltzer presented a survey on mental health training for Meals on Wheels drivers in MA, which showed fairly wide variation by regions in this training.

Discussion: Robbio makes referrals of other isolated seniors not served by Meals on Wheels. Roy stressed importance of the process of forming relationships with these seniors. Zeltzer suggested that we investigate whether in RI we can train staff of programs entering seniors' homes to observe mental health or dementia issues. Ott said another approach could be looking at the cost of caring for these seniors in hospitals. Adler asked what information about available services is given out by hospitals upon discharge. Ott said that hospital social workers reported that DEA staff used to consult with hospitals on discharges, when DEA had more staff resources. Fogarty suggested that DEA might offer training academies for hospital staff on handoffs upon discharge. There was a consensus that this topic should be an ongoing part of the Commission's agenda.

Next Meetings: Will be held on Wednesday, February 17 from 10:30 to 11:45 AM at the Pasteur Building 57. The Subcommittee on Isolated Seniors will meet from 9-10 AM in the RI Hospital APC Building seventh floor conference room of the Dementia Care Program.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 AM.

Minutes by: Bill Flynn